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SUBJECT: MARCH 2 ZAGREB MINISTERIAL TO ENDORSE NEW COOPERATIVE
"ARCHITECTURE" IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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¶1. Croatian MFA State Secretary Hidajet Biscevic previewed for the diplomatic corps February 26 the upcoming March 2 South East Europe Cooperative Process (SEEC) Foreign Ministerial. His presentation was brief but emphasized that regional relations have matured sufficiently to permit regional ownership of the new cooperative structures. He described Croatia's goal for its SEEC chairmanship as preparation for the future, through constructing a new architecture in Southeast Europe, which will permit the countries of the region to work together more productively.

¶2. Biscevic noted that the ministers will deal with a number of "procedural" issues related to establishing a Regional Cooperation Council (reftel). Ministers are also expected to task political directors to prepare an amended SEEC charter for adoption by the May 11 Summit. The amended charter will include a "Euro-Atlantic" element and make reference to the new institution. In addition to Foreign Ministers, the OSCE Secretary General will attend. Stability Pact Coordinator Busek was expected but a skiing injury may keep him away, according to the Austrian Ambassador.

¶3. Biscevic laid out a busy meeting schedule for the remaining three months of the Croatian SEEC chairmanship. After the March 2 Foreign Ministerial (preceded by a February 28-March 1 Political Directors meeting), Zagreb will host the following:

-- April 2-3 Regional Energy Conference, including governments and commercial representatives from outside the immediate SEEC region. The EU Energy Commission is expected to attend.

-- April 12-13 SEEC Home and Justice Ministerial; agenda to focus on Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption issues.

-- April (second half): SEEC Parliament Speakers

-- May 10: SEEC Foreign Ministerial

-- May 11: SEEC Summit. In addition to SEEC Heads of Government, Chancellor Merkel, EC President Barroso, and Enlargement Commissioner Rehn are expected.

Bradtke